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Farm Security: Fuel Tanks

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Farm Security: Fuel Tanks



**Rural Crime Prevention Project
Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University, Brookings
in cooperation with
University of South Dakota, Vermillion**

Farm Security: Fuel Tanks

Whatever makes your gas/fuel tank convenient for you usually also makes it convenient to a thief.

One of the handiest things is to have the tank accessible to all the family cars and trucks and tractors without somebody yelling that he can't find the key to unlock the tank.

That's inviting trouble. Even if gas prices weren't so high, there are always people around to take advantage of a "free fill."

A majority of the gas/fuel tanks in rural portions of South Dakota are not regularly locked, according to a recent survey by the University of South Dakota. (On the other hand, 87% of those farmers who have locks use them.)

Lock your tank

Without a doubt, the single most important thing you can do to stop fuel theft is to lock your fuel tank. A quality padlock with a 7/16-inch case hardened steel shackle is a good investment. A heel and toe locking feature will make it more difficult to open if it is cut.

Some padlocks are made so the key cannot be removed unless the lock is engaged. This is a desirable feature since it insures the lock has been properly secured, and it is a good reminder to lock your fuel tank immediately after you are finished.

Combination locks are convenient, but provide little security. They are easily cut, pounded, or manipulated open.

Tanks should be locked at both the fill opening to prevent siphoning and at the fuel cut off valve, which is just ahead of the hose connection. Securing the nozzle and hose alone will not prevent theft, and may add to your loss if the hose is cut to obtain the fuel. In addition, if your tank has an electrically operated pump, make sure the control switch is located in a locked building or in your house, and that you turn off the electricity when you are not using your fuel tank.

Location of the tank

The best location for a fuel tank is underground. Obviously, it's not visible. However, it's an expensive option.

If your tank is located above ground, an ideal place would be where the tank is visible from the house but, to the extent possible, concealed from the roadway. If you have more than one

tank, try to cluster them in the same area to simplify checking on them.

Lights

Lights can provide excellent security at low cost. The yard lights used regularly for general illumination of the farm yard can be utilized for fuel tank security as well.

Place lights to illuminate the general area surrounding the tank but not so they shine directly onto the tank. This will cause the tank to be "spotlighted" for potential thieves. Also do not point lights directly toward your house. You don't want to be blinded when you come out to investigate any noise.

An effective security light will allow you to see not only the immediate area near the fuel tank, but also will illuminate a wider area surrounding it. A soft light best suits this purpose. A bright light provides too sharp a contrast to allow you to see into the surrounding area.

Two types of "soft" lights are the mercury vapor and the sodium vapor lamps. Both have the additional advantages of being long burning (average lamp life is 18,000 to 24,000 hours), and of operating at a low hourly cost as compared to other types of lighting systems.

Fences

If the theft of gas is a considerable problem in your neighborhood, you may want to fence the area around your locked fuel tanks. This should deter all but the most determined thief.

Gates should be locked with the same quality padlocks used to secure your gas tank. Good locks combined with 3/8-inch thick hardened alloy steel chains will provide optimum security for your gates.

For more information on crime prevention, contact your local law enforcement officials or check with your county Extension agent.

Prepared by R.D. Mendelsohn and J.L. Faltemier with the assistance of D.A. Crotchett, Rural Sociology Department, SDSU. Survey data was supplied via the Statistical Analysis Center's publication of "Crime victimization in South Dakota," J. Villone, project director, and a Title V grant for an investigation of rural crime prevention, D. Dahlin, USD, project director.

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